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## A SPIRITUAL CYCLONE: THE MILLERITE DELUSION.

BY MRS. JANE MARSH PARKER, ROCHESTER, N. Y., AUTHOR OF "A MIDNIGHT CRY," ETC.

"EVERY age," says Cardinal Manning, "has hitherto had its heresy. But the nineteenth century has all heresies; it is the century of unbelief." He might have added that religious fanaticism is disappearing; that intensity of spiritual conviction is not a marked feature of the time; and that although the fanatic is an enthusiast—the inflammatory symptoms of his uncontrolled enthusiasm indicating chronic derangement—yet he believes *something*; his creed is not one of mere negations. The fact that the nineteenth century gave birth to a fanaticism like Millerism shows that, in the United States at least, religious fervor had not in the middle of the century become so chilled by indifferentism and unbelief that it might not be fanned into a dangerous flame; and that the stuff of which the martyrs was made is not yet eliminated from this agnostic age.

October 24th, 1844, the fanaticism of Millerism was at its height—was the feature of the times.

For twelve years it had been gaining strength—the last of a long series of similar outbreaks in the history of millenarianism, all based upon the literal interpretation of the prophecy, "Behold, I come quickly."

Millerism had an individuality of its own. It was rooted in mathematical deductions, founded on a literal interpretation of the unfulfilled prophecies of the second coming. It demonstrated as plainly as the simplest rule in mathematics possibly could, that, allowing that the generally accepted rule of biblical interpretation was to be followed, then the final judgment was to take place in the year of our Lord 1843 or 1844. The fixing upon the very day did not come until after the passing by of 1843; then it was clearly revealed to Father Miller and his followers that the mistake had been made by their reckoning Roman time and not

Jewish time. 1843 Roman time was 1844 Jewish time. The grand focalization of all prophecy was upon the tenth day of the seventh month, and at the hour of even. That was the time of the great feast of Atonement. It was reasonable to believe that the great and final atonement would be upon that day.

It is in a study of the leader of this movement—which was no inconsiderable one—that we reach the fairest comprehension of the fanaticism which may be classed among the foremost of those of the nineteenth century.

William Miller was born at Pittsfield, Mass., February 15th, 1782,\* and was a well-to-do farmer of Low Hampton, Washington County, N. Y. When in 1831 he came before the public with his gospel, he was a fair type of a prosperous, intelligent, and highly respected Green Mountain farmer. His two hundred acres of well-cultivated land were unmortgaged, and if there was one man before all others in the community whose common sense, honesty, and reliability were undoubted, that man was William Miller. He had been a captain at the battle of Plattsburg, and his record was a brave one. He had served as constable, sheriff, and justice of the peace in his native town, and was the local poet as well, writing exceptionally good "odes" for special occasions. He was more of a reader than many farmers, and his familiarity with books made him quite an oracle among his neighbors, who, nevertheless, were somewhat disturbed at his reading not only Hume, Voltaire, and Tom Paine, but at his able defence of their doctrines. But in good time he threw them aside and wheeled into the ranks of the Baptist Church, and then, in contrition for quaffing at poisonous springs, he began a most devout and con-

\* There is a life of Miller by White, Battle Creek, Mich., 1875.

sistent study of the Bible, having lost all desire for any other reading. Beginning with Genesis, he made the unfulfilled prophecies his special study. He would not pass a verse that he did not clearly understand by comparison with collateral texts. His concordance and his reference Bible were the only aids he would accept; the spirit of truth should lead him by his private judgment into all truth.

The result was, he rose up from that long and solitary study perfectly convinced that the prophet Daniel had clearly foretold *just when* the world would come to an end. Moreover, he could not doubt but that he had been raised up to warn the world of its impending doom, and what was twelve years for that warning, considering his weakness and the work to be done? "What thou doest, do quickly."

In his search for the truth he had become convinced that the popular doctrine of a temporal millennium before the second coming was fallacious; also that of the return of the Jews to Palestine. The next event in the history of the human race was its final judgment, and that was even at the door.

His theory of interpretation was founded on the established principles of Protestantism, and was in harmony with the popular teaching of orthodoxy. "If I am to be denounced," we find him writing, "for honestly believing in the exactness of prophetic time, then Scott, and Wesley, and the Newtons, and Mede, Gill, and others must be denounced." Spiritual interpretations of the Bible were then looked upon with distrust. Were not Swedenborgianism, Quakerism, and the last new heresy, Universalism, the outcome of a spiritual interpretation? All this, we must remember, was before "evolution," philological research, geological discovery, and a study of comparative theologies and Oriental sacred literatures had dug among the roots of old traditions. There was then little or no questioning of the infallibility of the writers of the sacred books—scarcely that of the translators and compilers. The six days of creation meant six literal days. The serpent of Eden was a veritable snake; a suggestion of Oriental allegory or mythological tradition would have been denounced as atheism. And so with every detail of prophetic and apocalyptic allusion to the final judgment. The literal falling of a shower of stars upon this little planet was none too much for the faith of those who, like St. Augustine, rejoiced in a faith that could accept what was beyond reason. The hymnology of the

period was in full harmony with such interpretation. William Miller's "Dream of the Last Day," one of his earliest publications, was colorless compared with the *Dies Ira* of the poets.

It cost him a painful struggle to submit to the voice commanding him to go forth and proclaim "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh!" A license to preach was at once given him by the Baptist Church at Low Hampton, but he was never ordained; not, however, because of any opposition, for he met nothing like that at the outset of his career.

He began preaching his gospel, or, to use the vernacular of the movement, "sounding the midnight cry" in the little country churches around Low Hampton. His old friends and neighbors flocked to hear him, and he met with little dissent from his teaching. His humble demeanor, earnest convictions, and simple eloquence won many converts. To hear him, with the majority, was to believe. His charts demonstrated everything. Upon those charts were rude and highly colored drawings of the apocalyptic beasts, Nebuchadnezzar's image, the great dragon, etc.; all surrounded by dates and biblical texts; a powerful attraction to the scoffers even, who, much as they might jeer at the zoological eccentricities, could not detect a mathematical blunder in the "sums" of addition and subtraction, which brought but one "answer"—1843.

Wherever he gave a course of lectures on the prophecies—and he could not begin to respond to the calls from many of the Protestant communions—great revivals were the result. Multitudes pressed to hear him. His fame spread through the land, and he was soon invited to Boston and New York, where he lectured before immense audiences. In two years the foundations of Millerism were well laid; prominent clergymen were preaching "the '43 doctrine;" nor were the converts confined to the illiterate and uncultivated. Several weekly journals were published, with a large and increasing circulation. From Boston, New York, and Rochester, N. Y., the literature of the movement was scattered broadcast over the land.

But there came a turn in the tide of William Miller's popularity; orthodoxy at last gave him and his disciples the cold shoulder. The change came about suddenly, and as early as 1842, if not before. It was not from anything William Miller had said or done, but from the zeal of his followers, who, having discovered that the Babylon of Holy Writ was the type of the churches in

the last days, began calling the churches which did not proclaim the speedy coming by the name of Babylon—singing hymns in which this idea was clearly emphasized. One of them wound up each verse with a jubilant chorus: "Babylon is fallen—is fallen to rise no more." It began with:

"When I was down in Egypt's land,  
I heard my Saviour was at hand—"

To become a convert was called coming out of Babylon; and terrible were the woes predicted for those whose pride made them linger within its doomed and falling walls. The profusion of disagreeable scriptural epithets bestowed upon Babylon naturally aroused resentment, and the rupture was at once pronounced. The doors of the churches were closed against Father Miller and his preachers, and his converts assembled in public halls as a rule, the largest halls of the great cities being too small for the crowds that pressed to the daily and nightly meetings as the time of the end drew near.

The press of the country, as a rule, gave fair reports of the fanaticism, some of the journals giving it a special column. The believers in the doctrine soon numbered some fifty thousand, not including the many who believed and trembled in secret. Orthodoxy did not dispute the near and literal second coming. It was fixing the time that it denounced as contrary to the declaration of Holy Writ—"of that day and hour knoweth no man." This difficulty was cleared away for the believers at least by the explanation that by searching the Scriptures the believer was to *know*, could not help knowing when the Lord was nigh. "When ye see these things, *know*." Could they help knowing what they saw, what they could work out like a mathematical problem?

"Father Miller" he was called by his followers. He had aged prematurely from a stroke of palsy, which made him tremulous. He had a rosy, kindly face, shrewd, twinkling blue eyes, which could read character unerringly. The many cranks and impostors that were the barnacles of the delusion did not deceive him. His power was in his strong mellow voice and earnest manner, making his most cultivated hearers to forget his homely phraseology and provincial pronunciation. His epistles to his followers remind one of the greetings of St. Paul to the elect. He wrote verses occasionally upon the speedy coming or subjects related to it, and many volumes of his lectures were published. He dreamed marvellous dreams, of which he told the interpretation thereof. He charged nothing for lecturing upon the

prophecies, to which his whole time was given, but he gratefully accepted as a free offering the payment of his travelling expenses.

The keystone of William Miller's gospel was the prophecy of Daniel—"Write the vision and make it plain upon tables . . . it will surely come; it will not tarry." The point of his argument was the connection between the seventy weeks of Daniel and the 2300 days. Therein was the revelation of the exact time of the end.

To any one inclined to enter into a fair controversy he would say:

"Open your Bible. That is to be your teacher alone. Now read the first three verses of the twelfth chapter of Daniel."

(1) "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

(2) "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

(3) "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars forever and ever."

"Now read the sixth verse," Father Miller would say.

"And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?"

"What wonders? The resurrection, of course. How long will it be to the resurrection? A time, times and a half. That's plain enough. Who swore it would be that? Our Lord Jesus Christ. Now if Christ Himself, in answer to the question, How long shall it be to the resurrection? has sworn with an oath that it shall be for a time, times and a half, is not that telling *just when* it will be? What is meant by a time, times and a half? Read the sixth verse of the twelfth chapter of Revelations.

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days."

"Now read the fourteenth verse.

"And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, times and a half."

"Now those two verses," Father Miller would say, "refer to the same period of time. It is the same as the 1260 days. The same period is presented under different forms in several places. . . . Times, times and a half is 1260 days. Allow thirty days to a month, and twelve months to a year, and we have three and a half years, equal to 1260 days. Has not God revealed the time in days that must pass before the resurrection? How do we know how to reckon those days? Read Daniel vii. 25.

"And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hands until a time, times and dividing of times."

Here he made plain that the time mentioned was the time of the continuance of the saints in the power of the "little horn." The little horn meant the papacy. Time, times and dividing of times was a period of the same length wherever spoken of in Scripture. Could it mean 1260 literal days, when the persecution of the saints had been far longer than that? If not 1260 literal days, what then?

Read Numbers xiv. 34:

"\* \* \* Forty days, each day for a year."

Now Ezekiel iv. 6:

"\* \* \* I have appointed thee each day for a year."

Admitting that days meant years, it was easy proving how the 70 weeks were fulfilled in 490 years, as many years as there were days in the 70 weeks . . . 1260 years from the time the decree of Justinian went into effect A.D. 538 to 1798, when the papacy was subverted by Napoleon. The time sworn to by Christ Himself meant the 1260 years. . . . The 2300 days and the four great kingdoms bring us down to the end, A.D. 1843. All the great events in the history of God's dealing with His people were preceded by special warning. Daniel knew by books *just when* the captivity of his people would end. So they were to know by books *just when* the days of the little horn were numbered, when the saints should possess the kingdom.

"If you can make a calculation with the prophetic Numbers," Father Miller would say—"a calculation based on a true interpretation that does not show you that 1843 is to see the end of the world, I should like to see that calculation."

"The tenth day excitement," as it was called, and notably the summer preceding that memorable October, was an experience, for the children of the Millerites at least,

which they never forgot. "Can any of my readers imagine" (I quote from "A Little Millerite," published in *The Century*, December, 1886) "what it was for a child truly to believe that at any moment, terribly near at the latest, there would come that fearful upheaval of the earth, that fiery rending apart of the heavens, and in the indescribable confusion of angelic trumpets and the shrieking of the damned God Himself would descend with a great shout to burn up the world, the sea, and the dry land? That was a faith sapping the well-springs of a child's joy. . . ."

As '43 had gone by, so did the tenth day, and the seventh month, and the year of jubilee, and still the vision tarried. And yet thousands of the disappointed continued to meet together, holding fast to their faith. The most of them had impoverished themselves for "the cause." Thousands of unsown acres that summer had testified to their belief that there would never be another harvest. Men of means had stripped themselves of their "filthy lucre," and concealed crimes had been confessed by converts to the faith. Of course the wreck was pitiful—the wreck of faith most pitiful of all. Many were the fanatical offshoots of the delusions, some surviving to this day. Leaders claiming supernatural gifts were plentiful, while individual interpretation of Scripture created many warring factions among those who had been brethren. Some drifted to the Shakers—it was transfusion of new blood for that fanaticism—while others went back to Babylon. But the majority did not forsake Father Miller, who was firm as ever in his faith, and at his call the remnant assembled in Albany, April 25th, 1845, and agreed upon a declaration of faith and the name of *Adventist*.

"There was no mistake in the prophecies," maintained Father Miller to the last. "Chronology was at fault."

But Christendom had learned a lesson, nevertheless. The delusion had its mission, leading to a better understanding of the Scriptures.

Father Miller died December 20th, 1849, aged 68 years. Upon his monument in the graveyard at Low Hampton is inscribed:

"But go thy way until the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

In closing this paper, which has left many of the notable features of the movement unmentioned, let me try once more to correct the popular fallacy that the Millerites were generally provided with ascension robes. I confess I have given up the hope of uproot-

ing that cherished fallacy, but I will continue to contradict it, all the same. My father was a leader in the movement. If any one had the facts upon this subject of ascension robes, he had. Father Miller did his best to disprove the ascension robe report, but the public would believe such stories in spite of evidence to the contrary. He requested, through the journals of the movement, that any one who could find such a garment should let him know the name of the owner, sending it to him if possible. A thorough search was made for ascension robes in that summer of '44 by leaders of the fanaticism, but nothing was found. The ascension robe which my father was charged with having proved to be his long night-shirt, and which had been seen on our clothes-line. But denial of ascension robes is all in vain. It will pass into the history of the movement that the believers all had them—long white garments, in which they arrayed themselves and went to the graveyards on the night of the tenth day of the seventh month.

"Each religious doctrine," wrote Theodore Parker, "has sometime stood for a truth . . . it has imperfectly accomplished its purpose. . . . Religious history is a tale of confusion. But looking deeper, we see it is a series of developments all tending toward one great and beautiful end, the harmonious perfection of man. Each form may perish, but its truth never dies."

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### THE FIRST SIX CHAPTERS OF DANIEL.

BY FRANÇOIS LENORMANT. TRANSLATED FROM HIS "MAGIE UND WAHRSAGE-KUNST," BY REV. CHARLES SYMINGTON, LITCHFIELD, CONN.

THE remarkable harmony between the recorded visions of the Assyrian kings and Nebuchadnezzar's dreams can hardly fail to strike us as significant. The influence which the former, according to the official annals, exerted on even the most weighty affairs of State, finds its perfect parallel in the importance which Nebuchadnezzar attached to his dreams, the eagerness with which he questioned his soothsayers, and the honor given to the young Hebrew who had been admitted to the ranks of the Chaldean literati, but who surpassed them all in sagacity and eloquence. These con-

siderations lend to the Book of Daniel a true Babylonian color, and such consistency with the characteristics of the time, as revealed in history, as must very materially raise our estimate of its value.

Notwithstanding this, as has been said, no Old Testament book has been so universally condemned by the Rationalistic exegetes, even the most moderate of them, as the Book of Daniel. Critics of this school are unanimous in denying to it an older origin, and see in it only an apocalyptic writing composed during the time of Antiochus Epiphanes and the religious persecution under him. Some, indeed, go so far as to set a specific year for its composition—167 B.C.

Now I must grant that the defence from the side of the orthodox writers has been hitherto of the weakest character. At least a part of the arguments adduced by Von Corrodi, Eichhorn, Berthold, Jahn, Gesenius, de Wette, Ewald, and Hitzig has never yet been answered. I, too, formerly adopted this view, and have repeatedly advanced the same in my writings, as far, at least, as my personal convictions as a Christian permitted; for, on the one hand, it seemed to me that the judgment of the Rationalistic exegetes disturbed nothing that need be deemed essential to the Christian faith in general, and, on the other hand, I was of opinion that the religious value of the Old Testament Scriptures is in no sense involved in questions concerning their often doubtful authorship and still more doubtful dates.

The Messianic prophecy of the seventy weeks is just as wonderful in a writing of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and to human apprehension as unaccountable as in a writing of a date shortly after Nebuchadnezzar. To destroy their value, it must at least be shown that the prophecies of Daniel are the work of a Christian writer, and this has not been even attempted as yet. The reasons which now impel me to change my former view and to adopt the declarations of the Talmud\* as to the date of the composition of Daniel are solely of a scientific nature and are based upon a study of the cuneiform texts, for these latter offer the most important data not only for a correct judgment concerning the book itself, but also as to the strength or weakness of the relative exegetical views.

If in what follows I deal only with the historical chapters, i.-vi., and pass over the apocalyptic and prophetic visions of

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\* Bava bathra, fol. 146.